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ISABELLA THOBURN.

# Isabella Thoburn

William F. Oldham

“The women that publish the tidings are a great host”

Jennings & Pye  
Chicago

4235-212

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## A BROTHER'S TRIBUTE

BISHOP J. M. THOBURN

My sister was an exceptional woman, one among ten thousand. Her strong character was notable for its simplicity. Her splendid courage was in striking contrast with her quietness of spirit. She was conservative by instinct and progressive from conviction. She was perfectly calm in times of storm and always confident in the face of disaster. Her faith was like a clear evidence, her hope like an assurance of things not seen. Her absolute devotion to the welfare of those who seemed to be thrown in her way was simply Christ-like. Would to God that a thousand young women of like spirit might be raised up for the splendid opportunities which are now opening up before the Church!

M312244



# Isabella Thoburn

Christian—Teacher—Missionary

1840-1901

SCOTCH-IRISH ANCESTRY.—I. *The Thoburns in Ireland.*—The Scotch-Irish are held in high esteem in America. So marked is this esteem that the average Protestant Irish family, when it begins to prosper, makes minute search for the dash of Scotch blood that is supposed to greatly enrich it and secure the family in popular esteem. The Thoburns were originally Scotch, probably sprung from Scandinavian ancestors. In the seventeenth century a portion of the family moved to the neighborhood of Belfast, Ireland. Here early in the last century one of the Thorburns, whose name by Irish attrition had come to be Thoburn, married Miss Crawford, and together they emigrated to the United States,—that “Beulah Land” toward which Irish eyes have looked longingly for a hundred years and never more eagerly than now.

2. *On reaching America* in 1825 the Thoburns were attracted to Eastern Ohio, where they settled on a farm near St. Clairsville. Ohio is one of the remarkable States of the Union, for here the severer culture of the older East meets the expansive and virile energy of the younger West. From this State there has come a larger proportion of the commanding men and women of the Republic than its mere numbers would lead one to expect. The Ohio man is prominent in State and Church, and the Ohio woman is in evidence everywhere.

OHIO HOMES AND SCHOOLS.—I. *The Thoburn Family*.—It was in the stimulating religious atmosphere of this great state that the Thoburn children were born and reared. There were ten of them, for this was one of those healthy, old-fashioned families that did not tend to disappearance in a generation or two. Five boys and five girls made the Thoburn home a bustling, busy place. Isabella was the ninth child and the youngest daughter but one. She was born March 9, 1840. All of the children have given a good account of themselves in life. Of the sisters, two have been much in the eye of the Methodist Episcopal Church, because of their wide public service in the woman's missionary activities of that denomination. Mrs. J. R. Mills is now the Conference Secretary of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the East Ohio Con-

ference, and Mrs. Ellen Cowen of Cincinnati is the efficient corresponding secretary of the Cincinnati Branch of the same society, which includes the States of Ohio, Kentucky and West Virginia. Her youngest brother is James Mills Thoburn, Missionary Bishop of India, a man as well known and influential for good as any man that America ever sent to Southern Asia.

2. *The parents* of these children were, it may easily be believed, people of sterling worth and deep religious fervor. The father was a class-leader in the Methodist Church. The mother, a woman of extraordinary force of character, profoundly affected her children's early religious life. As with Augustine and John Wesley, so with the Thoburns; when one inquires into the life and outcomes of the child, he must take note of the mother who, more than any other on earth, shapes infancy and adolescence into worthy manhood.

3. *Isabella's Education*.—Isabella, in common with the other children of the family, received her early education in the country public school. Here she proved herself a faithful student, not brilliant, but purposeful and thorough. She never would assent to a proposition, whether in letters or numbers, until she understood it. Mental thoroughness early characterized her. She might seem a trifle slow in reaching a position, but when she arrived

she knew the ground which she had been over thoroughly, and was competent to intelligently direct the next adventurer. It was unusual at that time for young women to go any farther with their education than the public school, but Miss Thoburn and her mother were agreed that the largest possible preparation for the work of life is the best investment of money and time that youth can make. So the public school course was followed by the training afforded by the Wheeling Female Seminary and that by a year in the Art School of Cincinnati. It was well that such sound educational foundations were laid in her girlhood by one who was afterwards to open the pathway to the higher learning for the coming leaders of a far away people. For Miss Thoburn to have been content with less than the best preparation which the times and her circumstances afforded would have barred her from the wider usefulness of later years.

4. *Early Teaching Experiences.*—Forty years ago the number of educated women was small everywhere. It was larger in Ohio than in most States, but not so large but that one might safely say of any well prepared woman that she would probably become a teacher. This Miss Thoburn became at the early age of eighteen. But though young in years, she was remarkably mature in judgment and had that admirable admixture of frank kindliness with



native leadership which enables its happy possessor to become at once the friend and guide of others. She, who was afterwards to open the way to college education for Christian young women in India, began her experience as a humble country school teacher in Ohio. And, indeed, it is no mean preparation for any place of usefulness in life to meet at life's threshold the severe test of a "country school marm's" experiences. What tact and shrewdness and native force that experience calls for in any successful issue of it, only those know who have tried and either failed or succeeded. If we were advising a missionary candidate with suitable preparation, who, for any reason, is detained in the home land for a while, we would recommend a year's experience in a country school room as likely to exercise and develop all those qualities most needed in a foreign missionary.

5. *Further Teaching Experience.*—From the country school she was advanced to higher grades of teaching, serving in influential positions for one year in a Young Ladies' Seminary in New Castle, Pa., and later in a similar school at West Farmington, Ohio. During these years she was always the earnest, helpful Christian worker, who came to richer, fuller development year by year. She gave much thought and attention to the pupils under her care. She did not, however, refrain from the wider

work of the day. The Civil War was making great demands upon the women, as well as upon the men of the nation. In all work looking to the alleviation of suffering among the sick and wounded soldiers she showed the same energetic but tender spirit that in after years made her so successful, and which won to her the hearts of all whom she touched. Her interest in the affairs of the nation never waned. When domiciled in India she followed all the larger politics of her adopted country with the keen, sympathetic interest of one who recognized that no lover of his kind can be satisfied until all organized society is so purified as to enlarge the chance for virtue in the individual; that men are "men" and not merely "souls," and that the true winner of souls is that "wise" one who recognizes that, whatever power there may be in the individual to live his own life, there is yet a solidarity in the human family which makes the ills of one the burden of all.

THE CALL FROM INDIA.—I. *Her Brother's Message.*—While Miss Thoburn was pursuing her useful work in America with no particular thought in her mind of service in any foreign land, events were shaping in India which were destined to entirely alter the course of her life. It may always be assumed that the people, who are most likely to benefit the heathen when they reach them, are those

who are faithful to duty and seize opportunity wherever they may be. The student volunteer who is slipshod in the work at hand and careless of the advancement of those around him here, can scarcely be expected to do notable things when he reaches some other land. After all, life anywhere only gives one an opportunity to work out what is within. In the absence of a devout, helpful personality mere change of locality means little. The even tenor of Miss Thoburn's way in Ohio was broken by the receipt of a letter from her missionary brother, James, who had been for several years in North India. He was a young widower and had constantly met with difficult situations created by the peculiar place assigned to woman in Hindu society. With him to clearly see a difficulty has ever been preliminary to a decisive attempt to meet it. As he found his work constantly hindered with complications which no man's hand could unravel, he promptly wrote his sister Isabella to take steps to join him as a missionary in North India. That fateful letter was fraught with weighty consequences.

2. *Woman in India*.—What James M. Thoburn felt in his work was the common experience of all missionaries in that land of strange contradictions, where excessive humaneness towards animals exists side by side with harshest and most unsympathetic treatment of women. The Indian woman has suf-

ferred, beyond her sisters of any other heathen land, the disabilities that later Hinduism has put upon her sex. As early as the fifth century before Christ, Manu, the famous lawgiver, in his code defines the place of woman and her relation to her husband as that of a slave to her lord, a creature to her master. He is to exercise the severest discipline in her treatment and in her standing in this world, and any glimmering hope that she may have of a life to come depends upon her servile obedience to lordly man. The sad history of Indian womanhood, as seen by those brought up in the free air of Christly teachings, has been pathetically summed up in *three brief sentences*, which, though, like all apothegms, not wholly true, still contain so much truth as to afford a severe arraignment of Brahmanism. This terse history is, "Unwelcomed at birth, unhonored in life, unwept in death." No heavier burden lies upon life in India than the inhuman and debasing treatment of womanhood by the religious prescription of the ruling faith. India can make but little advance in any true progress or civilization, except as the wrongs of child marriage, enforced widowhood, and the social suspicion and disrespect and religious discrimination against her, are lifted off the heart and mind of the Indian woman. No blacker cloud darkens any national sky than

the cloud of unhonored womanhood which overhangs India.

Among the most futile of *the defenses that are offered* is that the Indian woman desires the conditions under which she lives and most earnestly resists any alteration of social conditions. This has always been the lame apology of the wrong-doer. The slaveholder has always held his slaves for their good and has always pleaded their belief in his statement of the case; anything to the contrary has always been the mischievous work of meddling friends of the slave. And so with Indian women, there are not a few Western men who are tempted to believe the Hindu putting of the case. But what if the woman, deprived for centuries of the ordinary rights and privileges of a human being, should be sunk through the generations into passivity and even ignorant welcoming of her servile place. Alas, for the captive bird that never knew freedom!

But let any faintest understanding of the true state of the case, any feeblest knowledge of how other women live and are trusted and honored reach her, and at once the woman's heart in India pines for what she immediately recognizes as her natural right. Listen to *the prayer of one of these* as recorded by her fellow countrywoman, the Pundita Ramabai: "O Lord, hear my prayer. For ages

dark ignorance has brooded over our minds and spirits; like a cloud of dust it rises and wraps us round; and we are like prisoners in an old and moldering house, choked and buried in the dust of custom; and we have no strength to get out. Bruised and beaten, we are like the dry husks of the sugarcane when the sweet juice has been extracted. Criminals confined in jails are happier than we, for they know something of the world. They were not born in prison; but we have not for one day, no, not even in our dreams, seen Thy world, and what we have not seen we cannot imagine. To us it is nothing but a name; and not having seen Thy world, we cannot know Thee, its Maker. We have been in this jail; we have died here, and are dying. O God of mercies, our prayer to Thee is this, that the curse may be removed from the women of India."

3. *Unmarried Lady Missionaries*.—And these isolated women are cut off from any chance of male ministration. No male missionary may preach the gospel to any but the lowest caste of women of India, and even these listen with timidity and are ill at ease in the presence of a strange white man. The missionaries' wives work among them; but the affairs of the missionary households, the claims of missionary children and the necessary and legitimate sharing of the wives in the plans and burdens of their husbands prevent them from being able to



adequately meet the great demand for a female evangelistic and teaching agency. If the women of India, the home makers and mothers of Hinduism, are to be evangelized and taught the gospel of Jesus Christ and saved to honored and worthy womanhood, this must be done by unmarried women from Christian lands preparing a band of native women workers to carry the gospel into secluded zenanas in the cities and to the mohullas in the villages of that populous land. This James Thoburn saw and wrote inviting Isabella to join him. But there was a practical difficulty in the way.

4. *Missionary Boards and Women Workers.*—When Miss Thoburn, in response to her brother's invitation, sought to find her way to India, she learned that there was no existing organization of the Church which would authorize her going or her proposed work. The General Society had not thought of any but a male agency. All those who had the direction of the Society were men, and Christendom has ever been slow to recognize the possibilities of women and the value of their service in the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom. It was true that many young women seemed to be eager for missionary service, but this seemed only to add to the perplexity of the officials. Dr. Durbin, one of the strong men of the Church and the secretary of the Society, wails: "If I wanted fifty

young ladies, I could find them in a week; but when I want five young men, I must search for them a year or more." That it might be possible that God was moving the hearts of the young women, and that they might be exceedingly serviceable in the evangelization of the darkened peoples of the earth, seems not to have entered the male mind. And yet Miss Thoburn was so earnest and devoted a woman and so loyal a Methodist, that when she applied to the Society to be sent to India, they felt that they could not send her and yet scarcely dared to refuse to do so. There was the alternative that she could go under the auspices of the Woman's Union Missionary Society of New York, which was already in successful operation, but Miss Thoburn preferred to exhaust the possibilities of appointment by the agencies of her own Church before she would seek any other way of reaching what she sincerely and strongly held to be the work which God called her to do. This hour of man's perplexity was, however, the hour of God's opportunity, and there was about to arise a new agency which should solve the difficulty and become an added force of marked power for preaching the gospel to the ends of the earth.

5. *The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society Organized.*—While Miss Thoburn and the missionary secretaries were in this dilemma, the great Lord

of the harvest field was moving upon the hearts of Methodist women in a city far removed from Ohio. In Boston, prolific mother of great reforms and philanthropic movements, there met early in 1869 Dr. and Mrs. William Butler, the founders of Methodist Episcopal missions in India and afterwards in Mexico, and Mrs. Lois Parker, the wife of Dr. Edwin W. Parker of India. All three of these bore the burden of the depressed women of India upon their hearts, and as they described the condition of these women to their Boston friends, the idea sprang up of a female agency to meet this special need. A meeting was appointed to consider the subject and to take steps to form a society. The day came, Tuesday, March 23, 1869, and with it came a pelting storm. Six women were present beside the two missionary ladies. Nothing daunted the meeting was held. The speakers made powerful addresses, and the six hearers, greatly moved, proceeded to immediately organize the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. With splendid zeal the society was recruited from East and West till it soon numbered hundreds of members.

6. *First Public Meeting.*—At the first public meeting it was announced that a missionary candidate from Ohio had been referred by the general society to the Woman's Society. She was in every

way qualified and was eminently fitted to succeed. The Society was of tender age, and there was but little money as yet in the treasury. What was to be done? A vote had already been taken that the first missionary should be sent. Here was the lady already at their doors, ready to go! Mrs. E. F. Porter of Boston sprang to her feet and said: "Shall we lose Miss Thoburn because we have not the needed money in our hands to send her? No, rather let us walk the streets of Boston in our calico dresses and save the expense of more costly apparel. I move, then, the appointment of Miss Thoburn as our missionary to India." This speech met with ready response: "We will send her," they all cried. Amid scenes like these were the beginnings of that great Society, whose agents are now found in all heathen lands and in the unevangelized portions of Europe and Mexico and South America; whose income is rapidly approaching half a million dollars yearly; which has never known anything but an onward movement and has steadily gone forward from strength to strength; which, take it all in all, is the most splendidly successful Methodist society in existence. A few months later a medical missionary, Miss Clara Swain, M.D., was also appointed, and together the two unmarried lady missionaries, the first of the Methodist Episcopal Church, sailed for India after several farewell meet-

ings. The sight of two young women leaving home and kindred for the unknown dangers of a far heathen land greatly impressed the imagination and stirred the heart of the Church. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society has been greatly blessed of God in the quality of its workers. Bishop David Moore, after examining the Methodist Missions of Japan, China and Korea, writes in February, 1902:

"To the Secretaries of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society:

"I have now seen all your work in these three Empires [China, Korea and Japan] and am prepared to speak with authority. I am proud of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society and grateful for the work it is doing and the results it has already achieved. You have a remarkable body of workers. Were the selection to be made anew, I could not recommend a woman to be omitted from the list. The reinforcements seem to be hand-picked."

This testimony has been paralleled by competent observers in all other fields; but it may safely be said that the first missionaries of the Society have never been excelled. By general consent of her fellow workers Miss Thoburn was for many years of her later life held to be "first among her equals." Beloved and trusted by all, she was by common consent and without the matter ever being put into

words the guide and adviser of the whole body of women at home and abroad who work with her.

EARLY YEARS IN INDIA.—I. *Work Defined.* On their arrival in India the two missionaries were very kindly received by all, but there might have been much difficulty in the place to be assigned them in the field in their relation to their fellow workers, were it not for the quality and clearheadedness of the ladies themselves. The initial victory to be won for all time for women workers was first within the mission itself. What is meant will be more clearly seen by reading this extract from the pen of Bishop Thoburn, writing about his early experience with his sister: "I was not quick, however, to learn that the ladies sent out to the work were missionaries, and that their work was quite as important as my own. A few days after my sister had commenced work, I found myself pressed for time and asked her to copy a few letters for me. She did so cheerfully, and very soon I had occasion to repeat the request. The copying was again done for me, but this time I was quietly reminded that a copyist would be a great assistance to her as well as to myself. The remark made me think, and I discovered that I had been putting a comparatively low estimate on all the work which the missionaries were not doing. Woman's work was at a discount, and I had to reconsider the situation and once for



all accept the fact that a Christian woman sent out into the field was a Christian missionary, and that her time was as precious, her work as important and her rights as sacred as those of the more conventional missionaries of the other sex. The old-time notion that a woman in her best estate is only a helper and should only be recognized as an assistant is based on a very shallow fallacy. She is a helper in the married relation, but in God's wide vineyard there are many departments of labor in which she can successfully maintain the position of an independent worker."

2. *True Romance of Missions.*—The preconceived ideas of almost every missionary are likely to receive a rude shock on reaching the mission field. The usual thought is that the heathen world is full of amiable people eager to welcome the missionary and to lend themselves immediately to the carrying out of all the teaching with which the missionary is charged. A very brief experience easily upsets all this. The "heathen" are found to be as tenacious of their beliefs and modes of thought and habits as others; nor are they always ready to admit the value of the strange missionary's message, nor to see why they should change their ways, derived from generations of revered ancestors. The missionary early learns that the taking of the heathen world for Christ is not a romantic gospel

promenade, but a very serious piece of business which taxes the utmost resources of the best endowed and most fitly prepared men and women through successive generations. Happy is that missionary who, when the mere romance of the foreign aspect of his work is staled by experience, falters no whit because the higher and perennial romance of helping sluggish immortals and indurated civilizations by the quickening presence of the life-giving God remains as the calling for life's most strenuous endeavor. Even thoughtful and well-poised Miss Thoburn, who had been in close correspondence with her missionary brother James, did not find India the eager and waiting land that she had pictured. But she soon adjusted herself to the facts of the life around her and from the first saw with keen, unerring insight that if India's women were to be won and India's womanhood to be brought to worthy place, it must be under the leadership of Indian women and through their devoted service. It was clearly seeing this that made her so eager an advocate of the best training that could be given her Indian girls, and it was this which made her eager to thrust them, when fitted, into every place of responsibility that opened. And, again, it was this readiness to afford them every possible advantage and to give them every widening opportunities for service and responsible position, that so en-

deared Miss Thoburn to her scholars and fellow workers as to make their devotion to her something extraordinary and touching to behold.

3. *Her First School*.—As soon as she perceived that the first requisite was to train leaders, she determined to open a school that should develop into a high school for girls in the city of Lucknow. This city was the most suitable for the purpose, for it was the capital of Oudh and the center of Methodist activities at the time. It had been besieged during the Indian Mutiny twelve years before; but already swift moving events had made the Mutiny but a memory, and Lucknow was fast forgetting its bitterness in the changes and the new ways being introduced by the English. But whatever progress Lucknow might be making toward new ways of thought and life, the idea of a high school for native girls was entirely too advanced, not only for that city, but for all interior India. Not only was this too radical for Hindus, but even the English and Americans, who spoke dark parables about “spoiling the native women” and educating them beyond their sphere, were opposed to the scheme.

Miss Thoburn, nothing daunted, launched out, hiring a small court in the Aminabad Bazaar, and the older missionaries tell to this day with great glee how “Yunas Singh’s boy, armed with a club, kept watch over the entrance to the school lest any

rowdy might visit the displeasure of the public upon the seven timid girls who were gathered inside with the adventurous lady teacher who had coaxed them to come." The school was soon moved into the private house of one of the missionaries and rapidly grew into the famous Girls' Boarding and High School, out of which ultimately came the Lucknow Woman's College.

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR WOMEN IN INDIA.—I. While the troublesome questions of location and pupils were early solved, not so the question of what their training should be. Indeed, there is still an occasional controversy among the missionaries and their supporters as to whether missionary funds are rightly spent in providing any but a plain education for the children of Christian converts. The necessity for providing an educated leadership seems even now, strangely enough, to meet with question. It is true that the questions are growing fewer all the time, but that there should be any at all is a matter for surprise. What *Miss Thoburn's ideas on the subject* were may be learned from this utterance made at the Ecumenical Conference in New York in April, 1900: "The power of educated womanhood is simply the power of skilled service. We are not in the world to be ministered unto, but to minister. The world is full of need, and every opportunity to help is a duty. Preparation for

these duties is education, whatever form it may take or whatever service may result. The trained, which means the educated in mind and hand, win influence and power simply because they know how. Few missionaries have found the expected in the work awaiting them on the field. We want to tell women and children of Christ, their Savior and Deliverer, and to teach them to read the story for themselves. But instead of willing and waiting pupils, we have found the indifferent, or even the hostile, to win whom requires every grace and art we know. We have found sickness and poverty to relieve, widows to protect, advice to be given in every possible difficulty or emergency, teachers and Bible women to be trained, houses to be built, horses and cattle to be bought, gardens to be planted and accounts to be kept and rendered. We have found use for every faculty, natural and acquired, that we possessed, and have coveted all that we lacked. But it is not only our power over those we go to save that we must consider. When saved they must have power over the communities in which they live. We do poor work if we do not inspire others to go and do likewise. Intemperance, divorce, degrading amusements, injurious, impure or false literature, are all serious hindrances in the mission field. Women must know how to meet them."

2. *Lilavati Singh's Plea.*—With Miss Thoburn at the New York meeting was Miss Lilavati Singh, one of her pupils who, with Phœbe Rowe and a host of others, had been trained into lofty Christian womanhood by Miss Thoburn and who loved her with a strength and devotion rarely seen. It was of Miss Singh that ex-President Harrison said, that if Christian missions had done nothing more than make a Miss Singh out of a Hindu girl, they had repaid all the money put into them. Said Miss Singh, speaking also on the higher education of Indian women: "It has been said that because the gospel is to be preached, therefore energy and money and time should not be expended on higher education. With all that you have done for us in the past, you will never have enough workers for us. The only way to get enough workers to meet the demands of the field is to train us to do the work that your missionaries have done. I have been told that when the officers of our Church have the names of candidates presented to them, one of the first questions they ask is, What education has she had? Now I could not help thinking that if, with your heredity and environment, you require good education in your laborers, how can we poor heathen do efficient work without the same advantages? I have been with missionaries for a number of years, and I have seen them when their hearts have been





LILAVATI SINGH.

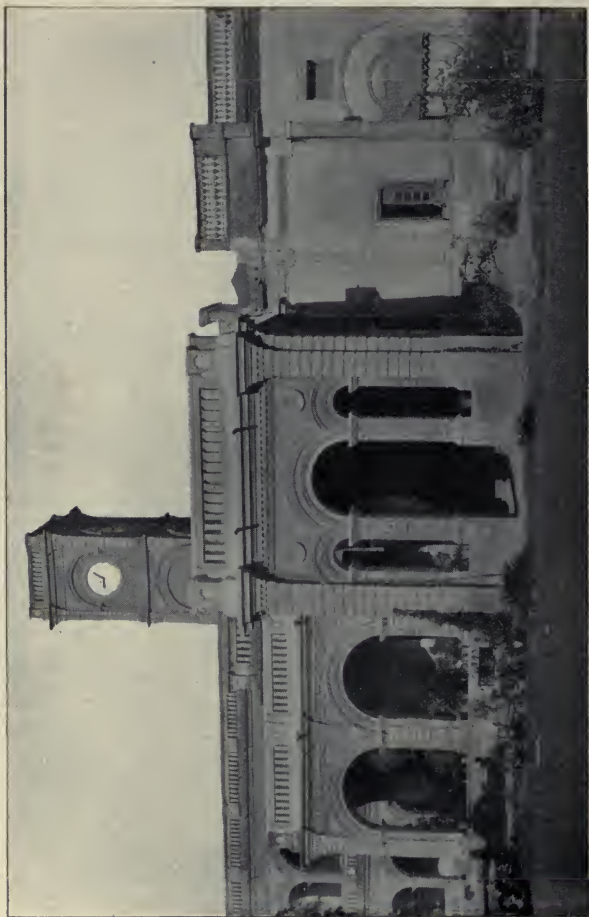


breaking. It is not the climate that breaks their hearts; it is not the difference of food and the strange surroundings; but what is breaking the hearts of a great many missionaries has been the failure of character in their converts. From my own experience, I want to tell you that failure of character comes oftentimes from ignorance; because we do not know any better we disappoint your missionaries. If you want us to be what you are and to be what Christ intends us to be, give us the education that you have had, and in time and with God's help and grace we will not disappoint you."

3. *Lal Bagh, the Ruby Garden*.—From the bazaar to a private room and then to a private rented house marked the outer movement of the girls' school, which was meanwhile growing in favor so greatly that the seven had become more than a hundred. Then came one of those marked days in the history of all missionary enterprises which bring in new eras. Pressed for room and not satisfied with the location of her school, Miss Thoburn heard of the possibility of securing a great house, built by a Moslem in a beautiful tract of seven acres studded with trees and fragrant with flowers. The estate was called Lal Bagh, the "Ruby Garden," and no location in the whole city was so desirable. She secured this property for about \$7,000, and with praises to

God and heartfelt gratitude the school was transferred to the new home. In all beautiful India it would be difficult to find a more lovely spot. Amid all her earnest, practical work how deep and tender a love of beauty held Miss Thoburn may be learned from her own description of her school home. "All about the compound are trees and shrubs, some of which are always blooming. When the hot winds of April are scorching the annuals in the flower beds, the amaltas trees, which the English call the Indian laburnum, hang out their golden pendants, making a glory about us brighter than the morning sunlight, while deeper than the noon heats blaze the red pomegranate flowers all thro' May and June. The rains bring out the dainty tassels on the babool trees and lower down the oleanders, which scarcely find breathing room amid the odors of tuberose and jessamine. In October and November the pride of India, a tall tree of delicate foliage, puts forth branches of wax-like white flowers. All through the cold season convolvulus, begonia and other creepers are blooming everywhere, clinging to the portico, up old trees, over gate-ways and trellis work. A passion flower covers one whole side of the portico. February is the month of roses, though some are blooming all the year round; and as the days grow warmer and March comes in the whole garden overflows with color and sweetness.





ISABELLA THOBURN MEMORIAL COLLEGE, LUCKNOW. (A Late Picture.)



Then there is the sacred pekul tree, a banyan and a palm; also seven wells, four of which are stone built, each of which is a treasure house." This beautiful house she called her home for thirty-one years. Here she added one department to another, until in course of time it came to be easily the foremost Christian school for Indian women. At the close of the first year it was determined to change the day school into a boarding school.

4. *Boarding Schools in Mission Lands.*—From the missionary standpoint a boarding school is of more value than five day schools, for the simple reason that in the former the children are cut off from the demoralization of heathenism and are steadily played upon by the forces that make for Christian culture. No better investment is made by the Christian Church than in the boarding schools placed in heathen lands. In 1887 the curriculum was widened and the school became the Girls' High School, and a collegiate department was added. Through all these years the battle for the higher education of Indian women was being pressed within the missionary ranks as well as foundations laid for it among the young women. Nor was the school anything like the conventional girls' boarding school. It was a real home for its inmates and the center of much sympathetic Christian activity, which touched the whole city around it and stretched

away to the farthest shores of India. Nor were the ministrations of Lal Bagh and its unbounded hospitality exercised toward Methodists alone. People of all the denominations and of none; Christians, Hindus, Mohammedans, the rich, the poor and chiefly the troubled and the sorrowful ever found there a ready welcome, hearty cheer and always the discriminating helpful word, more precious than gold. How Miss Thoburn stood the strain of her multifarious duties and how she contrived to use herself and her household in such varied and laborious ministry without any appearance of bustle and haste, that revealing mark of smaller souls, was always a mystery to her friends. She always found time for people who needed her, and yet she was punctual and the soul of order. Thus she became the adviser and helper of many. The whole mission sought her advice, and it was an open secret that her Bishop brother always felt more comfortable when she approved his constantly enlarging plans. While her school claimed her chief attention, she was never one of those unduly narrow ones who see nothing but the portion they are working at. She helped all through the city to create Sunday-schools, and with her pupils both taught these and visited the Hindu women in the zenanas. In 1874 she lent herself for awhile to Cawnpore, a neighboring city, and opened a boarding school there.





PHOEBE ROWE.

5. *Women Evangelists.*—Miss Thoburn was always intensely interested in the evangelization of the women and greatly favored the training of women evangelists for service in the villages and at the fairs and women's bathing places. It gave her great satisfaction when Phœbe Rowe, one of her trusted and deeply loved teachers, turned aside from teaching to do the work of an itinerating evangelist among the lowly, ignorant people of the villages. It will readily be seen that for the teachers and older pupils the wide round of activities and the practical interest in all manner of Christian work that made Lal Bagh a living center could not but broaden and quicken their religious life. No wonder that so many of Miss Thoburn's girls are teachers and missionaries and devoted Christian women! Such outcomes are natural and spontaneous under such leadership.

6. *Lucknow Woman's College.*—In 1886 came the critical day in the life of the school. One of her girls, desiring to study medicine, wished first to secure a college training. A woman's college had been opened in Calcutta, secular, and it may not be unfair to say, at least non-Christian, if not agnostic, in its religious positions. It was the only college in all India for women. Mrs. Chuckerbutty, the girl's mother, a Christian convert, would not hear of her daughter's going to the Calcutta School. "I wish

my daughter to finish her literary education, but I would rather she should know nothing more, than have her taught to doubt the truth of Christianity," said this godly Indian mother. Miss Thoburn keenly felt the situation and boldly proposed to still further widen the curriculum and lift the school to the college grade. The first contribution to the added expense was 500 rupees from the widow, Mrs. Chuckerbutty; and thus by a steady evolution, from the little day school in the bazaar in 1870 came in 1887 the Lucknow Woman's College, the first of its kind in all Asia.

The patient, earnest worker had won her battle against misunderstandings and questions on the one hand, and on the other against the stolid apathetic indifference to woman's training that characterizes Indian society. Not the least contribution which her work has made to the progress of that great people to whom she gave thirty-one years of her fruitful life, is the keen desire of the male workers to find educated wives and the equally earnest resolve of the native Indian pastors and leaders to give their daughters the best possible training. To have borne conspicuous part in transforming any portion of Indian society, so that those who a generation or two ago looked upon women as little above the clods of the earth should now begin to covet college training for them, is surely to have



secured very large returns from a life's investment. She found an infant Christian Church, gathered mainly from the poor and unprivileged; she found the women of this Church illiterate, burdened, incapable of much progress; she took the girls and made from them a new type of Indian women such as were never dreamed of; and when she had demonstrated in the actual product what Christ could do for Indian womanhood, her task was done and "she was not, for God took her."

HOME FURLONGHS.—I. While the thirty-one years her home was in Lal Bagh and, present or absent, she was its directing head, she was obliged twice to return to America for health and once to seek larger means for the work. In 1880, after ten years' service, she returned home via Palestine. Her visit to the Holy Land she greatly enjoyed, and she profited by it much as a Christian and a teacher. In 1886 her health failed, so that on her return to America she was obliged to remain no less than five years before sufficiently restored for service in the tropics. Again she came in 1898, bringing with her Miss Lilavati Singh, as fragrant a flower of womanhood as ever bloomed in that garden of Indian roses, to plead for \$20,000 to extend her College and its buildings. The money was gladly given her.

2. *Deaconess Work*.—During her five years of

enforced stay in America, from 1886 on, she was by no means idle nor spent her time in mere recuperation. She came to Chicago and there met Mr. and Mrs. Meyer, who had already launched their now widespread deaconess homes and training schools. Space fails to adequately describe this Christlike order of woman's ministry of the Protestant Church, which has in it all the devotion and single-heartedness of the Roman Catholic sisterhoods without the renunciation of personal liberty. Miss Thoburn was quick to see the value of this new arm of power, the value of trained women who do for love of God and man what cannot ordinarily be done for money. She determined to introduce the deaconess movement into India; but she was never one to ask others to go where she did not herself lead the way. She therefore became a deaconess herself and took the regular nurse deaconess training. She then went to Cincinnati, Ohio, and there proved invaluable in helping found the "Elizabeth Gamble Deaconess Home and Training School" and a little later the "Christ's Hospital," under deaconess management. When she returned to India, it was as a deaconess, and this order of service is being very widely employed all through India, where the deaconess ranks are being recruited from the daughters of the soil in increasing numbers. Wherever she might be, at home or abroad, she ever carried the seeing eye, the understanding

mind, the heart at leisure from itself and eager in all ways to minister to the unprivileged.

FATAL SICKNESS AND DEATH.—I. *The End*.—On her return to India in 1900, she resumed her place at Lal Bagh and all the accustomed activities were renewed. But, alas! it was not for long. The sudden coming of that awful plague, Asiatic cholera, the patient suffering, the unexpected physical collapse, the triumphant death, the dismay and passionate grief of the bereaved circle and the mourning of the whole Christian body in North India and throughout the English-speaking world form the triumphant close of a victorious life.

2. *Miss Singh's Letter*.—Details as to these may in part be learned from the following letter which is published in full, not only to convey an adequate idea of the value of Miss Thoburn's service in India, but indirectly to show the quality of an Indian woman molded under Miss Thoburn's hand. While Miss Singh and such as she live and teach others, the great and noble woman who founded what is now known as the Isabella Thoburn Woman's College cannot be said to have ceased living.

— "Lucknow Woman's College,

"Sept. 12, 1901.

"My Dear Mrs. Crandon:

"I tried to write to you last week but could not. It has all been so sudden; I cannot believe it. I get up each morning and go to her room expecting to

find her there, thinking that the other is a horrible dream; but she is not there, and if it were not for the fact that I can throw myself beside her bed and ask her God, who was so real to her, to help me, I do not know how I could get through these days! It is a little over twenty-three years since I came to know her, and I have been with her ever since, and she has become a mother to me, who am motherless. I forgot she was an American woman and I a Hindustani woman; I was as free with her as if she had been my own mother.

“Yesterday I went for a few moments to the matron’s room which used to be her room in 1882. Suddenly I remembered the talks she had with me there, the prayers she prayed with me as she tried to lead me to the Savior. I felt I was on holy ground and that I must bow in prayer. In fact each room, each spot seems to be associated with something sacred; here she prayed with me, there she said that to me, here I saw her help such an one, until my heart cries, What shall we do without her to help and inspire? I remember saying to her, when she decided to give us a college education: ‘Miss Thoburn, do you know people say you are spoiling us?’ She said, ‘Yes, but I want you to prove to them that love, confidence and education do not spoil people.’ And, dear Mrs. Crandon, again and again when I have been tempted to be slack in duty or low in motive, the thought, Miss Thoburn trusts you, has

kept me good and true. What can I say about her? At present I am writing in her room. I have filled her vases with favorite flowers; I use her pen; the blotting paper she used lies under this paper; I can trace her writing on it. Everything is here just the same, only our precious one is gone. I am glad for her sake, because she worked hard and needed rest which she would not take here. Again and again I would say to her: 'Miss Thoburn, do not rise at 4:30 A.M., like the rest of us; you are not so strong as we younger ones.' But she was the first to get up and the last to retire. Sometimes she did look so tired. Now she and Miss Rowe can rest together, but what will we do?

"But I must tell you about that awful day. On Thursday, the twenty-ninth, she went to Cawnpore to see about the stone for Bishop Parker's grave. We do not know whether she contracted the disease there or how she got it. When she returned to us, she looked well. Saturday morning she did a little gardening, baked cookies for us and when I saw her at breakfast she looked pale and tired. I followed her to her room and insisted upon her lying down and taking a little rest. I went to her room again at 4 P.M., and I said: 'Miss Thoburn, you look so pale; does your head ache?' She said, 'No, I am a little tired.' So I ordered the phaeton and insisted upon her going for a drive. While waiting for the carriage I said: 'Miss Thoburn, I am a lonely

woman, and I hope the Lord will take me home before He does you, for I cannot do without you; I want you to lay me to rest as you did Miss Rowe.' She said: 'I do not know whether you will go first, or I, for "the Son of Man cometh at an hour we know not of"; but if I go, I want you to have Phœbe's Bible.' When the carriage came she wanted me to go with her, but I said: 'If I go, I will chatter the whole time, and you will get no rest; I want you to have a restful time.' I sent her off, and an hour later I saw her arranging flowers in the dining room. It was Mr. West's birthday, and all the missionaries were invited for dinner. At dinner I noticed that she only ate her soup, and I said, 'Miss Thoburn, you are sick.' She declared emphatically she was only tired. At 10 P.M. I bade her good night, and that was all till 3 A.M., Sunday, when the night watchman came and called me and said she had sent for me. I went down and sent the carriage for the doctor and in the meantime applied the usual remedies. She said, 'The doctor will think you very foolish for troubling him for only an attack of indigestion.' I said, 'I would feel more comfortable were he around.' He came and looked grave and sent for the best doctors in the town. They were with her constantly. Till noon we had every hope, and I believe she herself expected to get well, and therefore gave no message. After 12 o'clock she was too weak to speak. When the cramps were very bad



she said, 'Let me hold your hand for I do not wish to groan.' That is the way our precious one had lived; no complaint about the hardest thing! When the pain was very bad, she said to me, 'Sing.' I said, 'What?' She said, 'Come Thou fount of every blessing.' I got some one in the room to sing that and others of her favorite hymns. In her pain and agony she kept speaking in Hindustani. It nearly broke my heart to hear her. She had lived for us, and she was dying for us; she was so one of us that in her last moments she forgot her own tongue and spoke in ours. There is no one like her,—our dear, devoted friend. She lingered on till 8 P.M., then left us. But for Christ's words, 'I will not leave you comfortless,—orphans, the margin says,—I will come to you,' I do not know how we could bear this sorrow. But now the cry of my heart is, 'Make me a little like her, that people when they see me may say, 'The spirit of Miss Thoburn doth rest upon her.' In her Sunday-school book I found her pledge in connection with the Twentieth Century Movement, by which she had promised to bring ten new souls to Christ. I had taken the same pledge, but now I must work hard for hers and for my own; and as my beloved is so near Jesus she can ask Him to help my weak efforts.

"I cannot tell you about the funeral, for I remember nothing. I will get some one else to write about it by and by. Miss Nichols has not been very well

this year and Miss Thoburn was troubled about her. Again and again she said, 'I thought she was the one for my place, but perhaps God has other plans.' But the strange part of it is that Miss Nichols is getting well in a miraculous way, and the doctors say she can stay in India. I wonder if it is because Miss Thoburn has seen Jesus face to face and asked Him for this that she wanted so much. But I must stop for it is time to send this to the postoffice. I had intended to write for the Branch meeting, as also for the General Executive, but now I cannot. Give them all my best love, and if you think it best, read them part of this letter. Tell them to be very good to us for we are orphans and, dear Mrs. Crandon, do try to send some one to take the teaching off Miss Nichols' hands, for we must keep her well, and she cannot teach and superintend both. The plan is to have Mrs. Parker live with us for a sort of adviser, but we will need another missionary to teach in the College. Pray for us, love us even more than you have done, for we seem so alone in the world without our friend.

"Yours affectionately,

"LILAVATI SINGH."

3. *God's Acre*.—Miss Thoburn's body lies in the Lucknow cemetery, beside the grave of Dr. Badley, the founder of the Reid Christian College. The bodies of these two great missionaries there await side by side the Resurrection morning.



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